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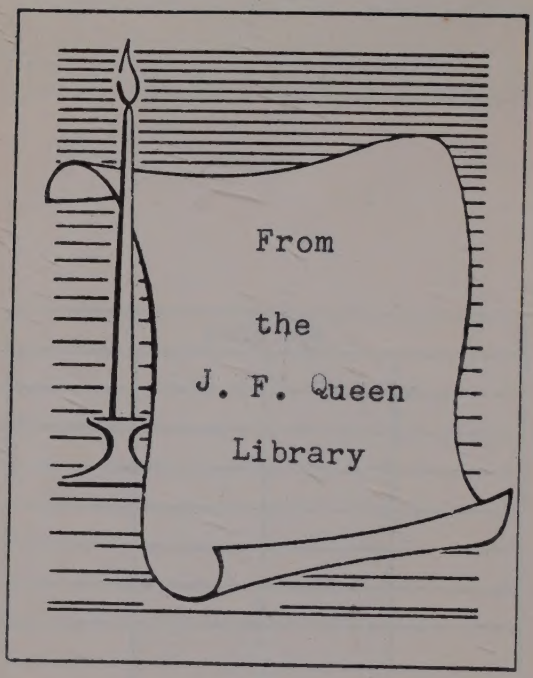

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THE BUSINESS MAN LOOKS AT PREACHING

THE BUSINESS MAN LOOKS AT PREACHING

BY J. H. ANDERSON

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NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE
SUNDAY SCHOOL BOARD
OF THE
SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION

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INTRODUCTION

The Business Man Looks at Preaching

The James H. Tharp Lectureship at the Baptist Bible Institute was founded in 1926 by one of the best known and honored Baptists in the city of New Orleans. His love for preachers gives him the desire that they may be their very best in character and conduct and in their public ministrations, and through his generosity it has been made possible for the Baptist Bible Institute faculty and students to have each year a sympathetic discussion of "The Preacher from the Laymen's Viewpoint."

Mr. Tharp, at the request of President B. H. DeMent, delivered the first series, and this he did in three addresses on April 20, 22, 23, 1926. From its beginning the lectureship has attracted earnest attention and has awakened increasing interest, and through the foundation given by Mr. Tharp it has been possible to secure for the lectures a wide reading by active ministers and by those in training at our seminaries and colleges.

Dr. J. T. Henderson of Tennessee, Secretary of the Southern Baptist Brotherhood, was the speaker in 1927; the Honorable Pat Neff, Ex-Governor of Texas, in 1928; and Secretary Frank Leavell, of Southern Baptist Student Work, in 1929. Each one of these laymen brought most helpful messages from the pew to the pulpit, which were a blessing to great numbers of hearers and readers.

In January, 1930, the Tharp Lectureship and the Layne Lectureship were both given during the same week, and the occasion was made a homecoming time for former students of the Baptist Bible Institute. Many

visitors from the city and surrounding country and near-by states joined in giving great congregations at every hour when Mr. J. H. Anderson and Dr. George W. Truett were to speak. It was a week of great spiritual uplift, and then also of practical instruction by Dr. Prince E. Burroughs and Dr. Clay I. Hudson of the Department of Church Administration of the Sunday School Board.

This volume includes the addresses given by the beloved and honored Baptist layman, Mr. James H. Anderson, of Knoxville, Tennessee. Over the radio, as well as to the crowds gathered in the auditorium, he won his hearers by the affection which he in every way manifested for the ministry, by his sympathetic understanding of the preacher's ideals and difficulties, and by the most helpful way in which he offered practical help and forecasted certain success.

Mr. James H. Tharp and the Baptist Bible Institute trustees, faculty, students and friends rejoice in the privilege of placing in the hands of our Baptist Brotherhood the lectures which brought such a blessing to us in our "Bible Conference and Home-Coming Week" in January, 1930. We join Southern Baptists in their appreciation of the modest and unassuming, liberal and consecrated layman who has loved his pastors devotedly and who has been constantly helpful in making their ministry joyous and successful. May the blessings he has brought to the preachers be multiplied to the beloved layman, J. H. Anderson.

W. W. Hamilton.

Office of the President,
Baptist Bible Institute,
New Orleans, Louisiana.

MY PASTORS

Mr. President, members of the faculty, students of the Baptist Bible Institute, and visiting friends, I come to the high task to which Dr. Hamilton has so graciously invited me with two emotions surging in my breast: the emotion of gratitude for the signal honor conferred upon me, and the emotion of a nameless trepidation, as I face the responsibility associated with the honor.

You will permit me, Mr. President, to congratulate you and your fellow workers upon the almost unprecedented progress and the large usefulness of this institution. Standing in this strategic center, the institute has been from the beginning a spiritual lighthouse and power-house—a lighthouse that has sent, and is sending, its white rays of guiding light to the ends of the earth —a power-house that has generated, and is generating, countless currents of dynamic spiritual energy, which have been and are a quickening, uplifting influence throughout the kingdom of our Lord. I join other Southern Baptists in saying, "Thank God for the work that is being done here! Blessings on you as you continue the great service so nobly conceived, so wisely and sacrificially continued to the present!" And now to my task.

My dear young brethren and sisters, I wish that I might salute you with a gesture worthy of the high service to which you have been called. While I cannot salute each of you with "an holy kiss," as was the custom in Paul's day, I *can* congratulate you with all the enthusiasm of my soul that you have been so highly honored of God. As I look into your bright, eager faces, they confirm all the fine things that I have heard of you. For nearly a year now, the one thought that has almost constantly lived with me has been of *you.* Since Dr. Hamilton's letter of invitation came, what to say to you has been on my heart. Your sweethearts and parents could not have thought about you more constantly, nor with more tender concern for your future usefulness.

On my way home from the Baptist State Convention last November, in the Nashville railway station, I ran into a large group of young men. Almost a thousand of them were going to Knoxville to see a football game on the following day between Vanderbilt and the University of Tennessee. We had to fall in line that our sleeping-car tickets might be checked as we passed through the gate. As we moved forward slowly, Mr. Frank Leavell came up and congratulated me upon the high honor your good president had conferred upon me by his invitation to be with you on this occasion. "O Frank, why bring that up?" I replied. "Like a threatening cloud, the thought of it has been hanging over my head all these weeks, but for the moment, watching these wild, rollicking boys, the impending ordeal had been pushed out of my mind. Now, here you come and bring it all back.

What shall I say to those young preachers down at New Orleans?"

"Well, I know how to sympathize with you," he said. "I went through the same perplexity a year ago. But you'll find them wonderfully responsive and sympathetic, and you'll be glad that you had the privilege after it's all over."

He passed on, but in the midst of college yells, the ballyhooing of the venders of college colors and football emblems, and all the confusing noises of the station, the old tantalizing question began again its ceaseless round in my brain—"*What* shall I say to those young preachers? What shall I *say* to those young preachers? Oh, what *shall* I say to those young preachers?"

And I am sure that this question would have kept repeating itself far into the night, keeping time with the click-clack of the car wheels as they flew over the rails, had not something happened just after I had settled myself in the sleeper, which saved me from a restless night. A fine, clean-cut, upstanding young fellow, with serious face and eager, inquiring eyes, came and introduced himself as a ministerial student. He asked the privilege of talking to me about my experience with preachers, and especially with my pastors. He wanted a layman's point of view.

Well, I could have fallen on his neck and kissed him. He didn't want to talk to me half as much as I wanted to talk with him. It seemed an answer to my prayer. You can imagine how I plied him with questions, and his interest was no less than mine, for he, too, shot ques-

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tion after question at me. We talked far into the night as the train sped through the darkness. Our meeting was the beginning of a friendship and intimacy and devotion that has been constant during the past two months. For, I took him into my home during his stay in Knoxville. Every spare hour almost, both night and day, we have thought and talked together about his life's work. He has talked to me as to a father, and I to him as to a son. All that I shall say to you during these days together will be a summary of our conversations. Many things were said that could be spoken only between father and son, and yet, I am daring to repeat them to you, in the hope that you will receive them in the spirit in which they are given. No doubt some things will seem out of place in a public discussion, too intimate and personal. If I err, you'll forgive me and know that my motive is good.

The first thing he asked me—but, I'll tell you his name first. He introduced himself the night we met as J. Paul Weatherby. When we became better acquainted, I told him that names split in the middle didn't appeal to me, and that I should call him Paul. He asked me to tell him of my pastors, from the first to the present one, with confidential comments upon their weak points as well as their strong points. And I told him about them as I am going to tell you.

My first pastor was, naturally, one of the old school, who felt that he was called, not only to preach the gospel of salvation, but also to defend the faith and practices as Baptists believe them. "Baptizo" was much used in his

vocabulary, and with its full meaning. He believed in being able, ready, and willing upon every occasion to "defend the faith once for all delivered to the saints." And he did it with power and perspiration that carried conviction. We have gone away, in a great measure, from doctrinal preaching. But I wonder if any of us realize the debt of gratitude we owe the grand old war horses of that early day, who laid the foundations upon which has been builded the great Baptist constituency of this day and generation?

My father and mother, in their youth, moved to Kentucky from Pennsylvania. Father's people were foot-washing Dunkards, and mother's were Lutherans. They came under the influence of the powerful preaching of men like Peay, Coleman, and others over in Kentucky, and were convinced that Baptists held the truth. Thousands of similar instances, no doubt, could be found.

My next pastor was a mild-mannered man, a saint in Israel, good and faithful. My recollection of him centers around those two words, good and faithful—not a great preacher, a little tiresome and dry to a boy of teen age, but all God demands is that one should be good and faithful. He preached for us once a month, and had to ride horseback twenty or twenty-five miles over the muddiest roads you ever saw in winter, and the dustiest in summer. I can very distinctly recall my father frequently saying: "Our preacher will be in his pulpit at the appointed time, no matter how bad the weather, nor how high the water." To be good and faithful is all God asks of us. The work of the world is done by the

good and faithful, not by the geniuses. What an encouragement to us! Who can ever write a worthy memorial to those humble men who pioneered for God in those days through hardships and sufferings of which this generation knows nothing?

My third pastor performed our wedding ceremony. He was a cultured, Christian gentleman, not a profound preacher, but a big, loving-hearted man. His affability and genial, cheerful disposition stand out in my memory of him more distinctly than any other attribute. His face was always wreathed in smiles, which brightened and helped all who met him. For there is nothing so contagious as a smile. How many burdens were lifted, how many saddened hearts were encouraged by his cheery smile! Henry Ward Beecher said: "Nothing in this world can smile but man. Precious stones may cast a reflected light, but what is a diamond flash to a mind flash, or an eye flash? A smile is a light in the window of the face, by which it signifies that the heart is at home and waiting. A face that cannot smile is like a bud that cannot blossom." Of all the people in the world who ought to carry a smiling countenance, surely it is the minister. There is more religion in a smile to the living than in a eulogy to the dead.

My fourth pastor was a young man, one of the most brilliant pastors I have ever had, and as loving and tender as a woman. He was with us in our first great sorrow, when God took our first baby. He knew so well how to apply the balm of the Christian's consolation to crushed and broken hearts. My heart grows tender and

loving upon every thought of him. Satan overcame him once, and he fell a victim to the curse of strong drink. The Sabbath following, he preached a sermon of confession that made such an impression upon the entire church and community that even to this day it is talked about by the older people. In this sermon he quoted the poem, "The Bird With the Broken Pinion Never Soars so High Again," but he had more power from that day on, and proved that "The Life that Christ has healed, higher still shall soar again." Prompt and penitent confession is God's healing lotion for his children who do wrong. If the wrong has been public, the confession must be public. Few of us have the Christian grace of frank confession.

My fifth pastor was a man like the Apostle James. He insisted that a Christian's works should harmonize with his profession. No one preached salvation by grace more positively than he did, but he had no patience with the man who claimed that he had been converted and gave no evidence of it in his every-day life, or in his support of the church with his means. From him came my first deep conviction concerning the Bible teaching of the tithe, and not only my conviction of its truth, but the practice of it. What a debt of gratitude I owe to that grand old man for leading me to see that the tithe is the least any Christian can give and remain honest with God. I tremble to think of the narrow escape I had.

My sixth pastor was a very attractive preacher, deeply evangelistic. He drew the young people to our church in great numbers. He had visited the Holy Lands more

than once, and this gave him the background for many interesting and helpful talks. Nothing broadens a man more than travel. This pastor spent many of his vacation periods in visiting other lands, and used the knowledge thus gained in forwarding the kingdom's interest in his church.

My seventh pastor was one of the most brilliant preachers of all my pastors, a hard student, who never went into his pulpit unprepared. Dear Dr. Gambrell used to say, in talking to young preachers, that the most common sin among ministers was "hound-dog" laziness. Well, this pastor didn't have one drop of lazy blood in his veins. Perhaps the lesson his life brings to us is the most important of all. Mental laziness in a preacher is an awful sin.

My eighth pastor brought to our church a broad vision of world affairs. It was during the World War, and he had seen and heard much of it where it was happening. One of his slogans to our church, as he urged foreign missions was, "Study big maps." He was a master of pulpit oratory, and always drew large crowds. Possibly he was one of the most popular preachers in the Southern Baptist Convention.

And what shall I say about my present pastor? Well, it seems to me that he is the composite of all those who came before, embodying every good and fine quality of all of them. He has the great shepherd heart that knows no limit. The cry of any lost lamb or sheep strikes terror to his heart, and no power on earth can hold him back. "His zeal hath consumed him"; and he is even

now slowly convalescing after three months of hospital experience, where he has been trying to restore a worn-out and broken body. The following will illustrate his shepherd heart. A traveling man asked me one Saturday afternoon if our pastor would be in his pulpit Sunday morning. I said, "Yes, and I hope you will worship with us." "Well, I came up from Atlanta for that very purpose." "You have met him before then, I suppose?" "Only once," he replied, "but under such circumstances that I could never forget him, nor cease to love him." "That is interesting, won't you tell me about it?" And this was his story: "My wife was visiting in Knoxville a year ago, and one day, in crossing one of your narrow, dangerous streets, she was run down by an automobile and left in the street by a hit-and-run driver. Your pastor chanced to be in his car immediately behind the car that hit her, and, jumping out of his car, he picked her up and rushed her, unconscious, to the hospital, and remained until she could tell who she was and where to wire for me, her husband. I arrived about midnight. Your pastor was waiting at the depot for me, drove me to the hospital and remained with us until my wife was pronounced out of danger. I went to hear him preach the next morning. He preached just as he had acted in caring for my wife. Do you think I could ever forget a man like that?" In passing, I want to say that our pastor has never referred to this incident, and would be embarrassed if it should ever be mentioned to him.

Under his wise leadership, our new church was built without any reduction being made in the gifts to our

Cooperative Program. Not only is he the best pastor I ever had, but is the wisest leader in all the activities in our church and denomination. It cannot be emphasized too strongly that the pastor holds the key to the progress of the church, not only in its spiritual life, but in its financial progress as well.

Paul asked me to give him the practical advice of a business man who has come in contact with hundreds of preachers and known many of them intimately over a period of many years. My reply was: "I have known men who became successful preachers in spite of difficulties and drawbacks, and others who have fallen far short of success because of things that could easily have been corrected. I have seen preachers become unpopular because of things so personal that no one would like to mention them. No matter how good one's intentions may be, bad breath, body odors, dirty fingernails, a two days' growth of beard are repellent to people of good taste and habits."

Any man, especially a preacher, should keep his suit clean and well pressed, his tie neatly tied, and his shoes polished. His family, too, should be well dressed, not necessarily expensively, but neatly and conservatively dressed. I know that cleaners' bills are high. But let me tell you a secret that will save you money. Get some mineral spirits from the paint store at 50 cents a gallon and do your own cleaning at home. This fluid will not take any spot out, but it will take the dirt out of silk or woolen cloth, leaving it just as it was before, minus the dirt. It isn't even necessary to press the garment

after cleaning it with mineral spirits, unless it needed pressing before it was cleaned. This fluid is highly inflammable, and should be carefully handled.

You may say that these things are incidental, that they have nothing to do with the real merit of a man. Well, they are not so trivial as one might think. They are not sufficient in themselves to preclude one's usefulness, but they can mar an otherwise fine life. You know how completely a small cloud can obscure the gorgeous splendor of a sunset. We know the sun is there, but it is the cloud that we see.

It goes without saying that the behaviour of the pastor and his family must be above reproach. It seems rather out of place to mention such a thing to a fine Christian boy, but I have seen preachers who have conducted themselves in such a way as to lose the confidence of the people. I have known others who have been thought of in connection with good churches, but have been turned aside because of their families. They may not be in sympathy with the church work, or they may be contentious, or hard to get along with, or for some reason interfere with the successful management of a church. Now, of course, a man may not be able to control the conduct of his family, but he can think of these things when he is selecting his wife, and if he chooses the right type of girl, he has gone a long way towards insuring the future.

Many a preacher has become discouraged and lost heart, and lost his grip on his work because of the extravagances of his family. A preacher's salary may be

inadequate, but whatever it is, he and his family must live on it. Keep within your income, however small it may be, and thus hold the respect of your people. A high standard of Christian living is expected of a preacher and his family, and there are many calls on them, but if the young, poorly paid preacher does not live within his income when it is small, he will live just as far beyond a larger income if he gets it, because the demands always increase faster than the income.

I am a great believer in the budget system for managing the finances of the home. Now, I know that budgets are sometimes ridiculed, but they serve a useful purpose, especially to a young couple just starting out. An experienced cook can serve a delicious meal without looking at a cook book, but a girl just learning to cook must be guided by the cook book, and even then she sometimes makes a failure, not because the recipes are wrong, but because she made some mistake in following them.

Make a list of all the expenses you know you will have during the year, including your tithe and your percentage to the savings bank, leaving a good margin for the unexpected expenses, because there will always be many of them. Trim down the items until they fit the income without any stretching, and then force yourself to stick to the budget, even if it does call for some self-denial. In that way, you will never be burdened with debts. Any young man starting out in life ought to pay his bills promptly, but especially is this true with the young preacher. If a preacher is slow in meeting his

obligations, he is sure to be criticised by his own people, and certainly by business people outside the church.

Never assume an attitude of expecting concessions because you are a preacher. What little you may gain by such a practice will be more than offset by the loss of respect that you will suffer from it. Any proffered courtesy should be graciously accepted, but never sought. Don't assume a beggarly attitude. You may be poor, but remember that there are people in other walks of life just as poor or poorer. When a preacher goes about, figuratively, with his hand outstretched for a gift from someone, he not only cheapens himself, but he brings criticism upon his whole profession.

Sermons should rarely be more than 35 to 40 minutes long. In the preparation and delivery of your sermons, follow the advice of the sainted Dr. Broadus: "Studiously, laboriously, and prayerfully write your sermon. With painstaking care, write and rewrite every sentence. Read it over and over until your mind and heart are full of it. Then leave your manuscript in the study, enter your pulpit, pull out the bung, and let her caper." Cultivate a good pulpit voice and manner. Even a poor speaker can improve if he will set himself to the task. Stand squarely facing your congregation and speak distinctly. Use good English. Be sure of your pronunciation.

Dr. Truett told me that for years he received an anonymous letter every Monday morning, containing a kindly criticism of his Sunday sermons, which was of incalculable help to him. Grammatical errors, mispro-

nunciations, incorrect use of words, poorly constructed sentences, unpleasant tones of voice and any mannerism that he was developing which detracted from the sermon—all were set forth in this letter. If every young preacher had a wise and capable wife or friend, who could render such a service, how helpful it would be. Avoid either extreme, street language or bookishness. A little wit occasionally adds to the interest of a sermon, but a sermon made up of jokes places a preacher on the level with a vaudeville actor. People go to church, not to laugh at a lot of jokes, but that they may hear the gospel preached. However, apt illustrations are wise; Jesus used them.

Try not to become involved in any disputes between church members. Maintain a cordial relationship with your people. The most popular preacher is the one who is the best pastor. A fine orator may fill the church for a while, but the people soon tire of oratory alone. The pastor who wins the confidence of his people and convinces them that he sympathizes with them in their sorrows and rejoices with them in their happiness is the one to whom they cling. Other things being equal, the heart wins over the head.

One evening Paul was very much depressed, saying that he felt so helpless and unequal to the work of a preacher, that he was afraid he had made a mistake, and, perhaps, he had not been called to preach at all. He is a modest boy, and inclined to depreciate his ability; he has something of an inferiority complex. I did my best to encourage him, telling him that if he *felt* equal to the

task, it would be a sure sign that he was *not*, that God would take care of him if he did his best. Man's extremity is God's opportunity. But he must be sure to do his *best* and not allow his feelings to paralyze his efforts. The following old Japanese proverb seemed to thrill him and help him:

> "The morning glory of the hour,
> Envies not the pine tree of a thousand years."

The morning glory is one of the simplest flowers that blooms. It is rarely found in the bouquets that adorn our homes, or that are given to the sweet young graduates at commencement. It is seldom seen except as it blooms on the trellis over the kitchen door. As it looks out from its humble place, upon the great pine tree that towers up to the sky, with its roots down deep in the earth so that it can defy any storm that blows, as it sees the massive trunk holding within it great timbers with which to build factories to produce the necessities for mankind, or to build mighty ships to carry food to people of other lands,—if the modest morning glory with only an hour to live were like you and me, it would say, "How insignificant am I! What's the use? What can *I* do? I'll just fold up my little petals and give up." But, instead, it says, "I'll do my very best to make the world brighter and happier for the hour that I live," and it opens up its beautiful little face to help, encourage, and cheer all who pass by, and then folds up its petals, having done its full duty. Oh! that all of us could catch the spirit of this old proverb,

"The morning glory of the hour envies not the pine tree of a thousand years."

Then, I spoke to Paul about the practice that some preachers have of maneuvering for a call. I urged him never to do it, that such a method was unworthy of a minister, and that I was sure he would lose more opportunities than he would gain by it. I believe that God calls *every* man to a certain occupation, but certainly we cannot doubt that, in a very definite way, he calls his preachers. And if he calls them to the work, will he not open the way for them to whatever field he wants them to go? Perhaps it won't be just the field that one would select for himself, but our Father knows where his laborers are needed most. Nothing prejudices a pulpit committee against a prospective pastor more quickly than to know that he is seeking the place.

All these things may sound superficial, but don't lose sight of the fact that they count tremendously in the success or failure of a preacher and his work. But the *BIG THING* is his love for Christ and his devotion to his work, his everlasting faithfulness and sincerity that convinces his hearers that he is bound up, mind and soul, in the work of bringing lost souls to Christ. He must have great faith himself before he can bring others to believe. You have this faith, Paul, in a certain measure. Build it up by communion with God in prayer, meditation, and the study of his Word.

This special word to you, Paul, called of God "to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ," you have consecrated yourself to this glorious mission, and are avail-

ing yourself of every opportunity to receive the best possible preparation for this high and noble service. (And I say, by way of parenthesis, that your conception of your life work may be measured by your willingness to prepare for it.) With humility and courage, with faith and love, with purity of life and purpose, in unbroken fellowship with Christ through his Word and prayer, you move to your pulpit in this or another land. With flaming zeal, but without narrowness; with surging enthusiasm, but without bigotry; with deep convictions, but without intolerance, you are to point men and women, boys and girls to the "Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world."

Someone, I believe that it was the revered Dr. Broadus, told the story of the brilliant young minister who in the early days of his ministry faithfully presented Jesus Christ in every sermon, presented him as a Saviour, as Lord, as King. After a few years, he seemed to lose his vision of that blessed face, and his messages were upon philosophy, literature, and topics of the day. Time passed. Coming to his pulpit one Sunday morning, he found a note pinned to the pulpit covering and read the words, "Sir, we would see Jesus." The words rang in his heart and searched his soul. Until a late hour that night he remained upon his knees. He fought his way back to a clear vision of his Saviour. After that night of prayer, his messages had the old-time ring. In every sermon he brought his people consciously into the presence of their Lord. As he continued the messages that enthroned his Saviour, one Sunday morning he found another note in

the same handwriting on his pulpit, and he read, "Then were the disciples glad when they had seen their Lord."

We who sit in the pew send up to you in the pulpit unceasingly the silent cry, "Sir, we would see Jesus." As you lead us to a clearer and yet clearer vision of him, our hearts sing with joy. "Then were the disciples glad when they had seen their Lord."

FINANCING THE CHURCH

Perhaps the most important, and I hope the most helpful, conversation Paul Weatherby and I had was upon the financial condition of our denomination. We discussed the $500,000.00 indebtedness of our Foreign Mission Board, with its crushing and disheartening effect upon our missionaries on the field, as they are forced to curtail their work, and the tragedies it has wrought upon the lives of our young men and women who have prepared themselves for the foreign work and are denied the privilege of going. We talked about the 1 1-4 million debt upon our Home Board, and the decreasing receipts, which are very little more than sufficient to pay the interest charges. We talked about the distressing conditions under which our schools, hospitals, orphanages, and every agency that bears the Baptist name are laboring.

We talked about what would happen if our Cooperative Program should fail completely. "Do you think," said Paul, "that we would be forced to go back to the old plan of special campaigns for each one of our causes?" No, Paul, we must never do that. Our Father's business is too large to handle by that unbusinesslike method. Every large business must have its departments closely tied together, and must work cooperatively for the success of all. Our Cooperative Program is all right

for the coordination of our agencies and the equitable distribution of our funds. Our present condition is not because of any fault in our plan. It may need some readjustments, but our present condition is the result of our failure to use God's plain, simple plan in raising the money with which to carry on his work. And I verily believe that God has brought us to this dark hour to teach us that no man-made plans will ever take the place of his plan. We have tried every plan that the ingenuity of man could devise, and all have miserably failed. O Paul! Paul! would that God might lay his hands upon you and all other young preachers, and the older ones as well, and send you out as flaming evangels crying to his wayward, disobedient children, "Repent ye! Repent ye! How much longer will ye rob God of his tithes to spend them upon your own selfish pleasures? Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in my house, and try me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven and pour you out such a blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it."

Paul asked me one evening to tell him my personal experience in coming to the practice of the tithe, and my observation of the forty years that have gone by since. (This will be embarrassing to repeat here, but I promised you that I would faithfully recount all that was said between Paul and myself, and I shall keep my word.) As a background, may I say that my father had come up from childhood through pinching poverty. He determined that when he had children of his own, he would

train them to accumulate money, that they should not suffer as he had. His training was different from any parents I have ever known. Most parents tell their boys they must work during hours out of school to make money with which to buy their clothes, and in that way teach them the real value of money. My father made his boys work to make money, and then made us save it. He told us that he would buy our clothing, and if, now and then, we just had to have a nickel or dime to spend, we should come to him, and if he could possibly spare it, he would give it to us. But our own money must be sacredly kept and added to as often as possible. The result of this training was that we became obsessed with the idea of accumulating and watching our little fortunes grow, and we would have gone hungry rather than spend one cent of our savings. A wise plan it was, teaching us the all-important lessons of self-denial and thrift. In this spend-thrift age in which we are living, it would be a blessing if more parents would follow this wise plan with their children.

Coming from this background, it can be understood how easily one might grow into a hoarder of money, even though my father was always a very liberal supporter of all Christian work.

Like many young men starting in business, my first little store was financed on borrowed capital. During the first year, I gave practically nothing to my church, excusing myself by the usual explanation that I must pay my debts first. One day God kissed our first baby into heaven, and at the same time spoke through this ter-

rible sorrow of our neglected duty. Then, shortly after, under the wise direction of a consecrated pastor, the Bible teaching of the tithe was burned into my soul. From that blessed day, my tithe was brought regularly into God's storehouse. I paid a big price to learn this lesson. Since that day, forty years ago, my business has always made money far in excess of anything I had ever hoped or dreamed. Many years ago, I felt that God had been so gracious to me that my tithe was doubled, then trebled, and quadrupled, and as nearly as I can tell now, I am giving all my increase above my living.

The rich, glorious experience of these years could never be spoken; but as I look back over them, I bear testimony to the joy and soul satisfaction that has come to me, as Sabbath by Sabbath, my offering has been placed on the altar of my church.

Another day Paul asked me what arguments or reasons I used in trying to induce men to bring their tithe into the church regularly and systematically every Sunday. My reply was:

"*Obedience* to the command of the Book is always the first motive I present. This motive should be sufficient to any Baptist. Our forefathers went to prison rather than disobey the Holy Bible, and many today would fight for the right to follow our Lord in baptism as we are commanded. We parents rejoice in our children when they readily and cheerfully obey our words. How much more is our heavenly Father pleased when his children obey him, and how it must nearly break his

heart when we persist in our disobedience. If we love him, we will do his will.

"*Success* is another motive. 'Nothing succeeds like success' is just as true in our heavenly Father's business as it is in our secular business, and we work night and day to achieve success for ourselves. If we could get a plan for our business that would bring success as surely as God's plan will for his business, we would pay any price for it. If all Southern Baptists would tithe their incomes, it has been estimated that 100 million dollars would be brought into the Lord's treasury every year.

"*Sincerity* is a motive that should stir our souls. How the world hates a hypocrite! Some of the severest words of Jesus were spoken against hypocrisy. If one really loves the heavenly Father, the natural thing will be to shower gifts upon him. We claim to love him with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our mind. The only way we have of proving our sincerity is by supporting the work for which he died.

"*Justice.* Can anyone conceive of a more just plan than God's plan of the tithe for every one of his children? If we make little, we give little. If we make much, we pay in proportion. Everyone should be willing to bear his part of a burden. His sense of justice will prompt him to do it. We have stressed the love and mercy of God so much that we sometimes forget that he is also a God of Justice.

"*Influence* is a motive that should search every heart. Whether we will or not, every one of us influences others

for good or bad. How careful we should be! The children are watching us. One liberal soul in a church, no matter how small his gift, inspires countless others to liberality. No greater calamity can come to any church than to have within its membership a man of wealth who gives grudgingly and meagerly.

"God's plan is *easy*. In his wisdom and love, God gave us the easiest plan his omniscience could conceive of. His fatherly heart could do nothing less. The story of the old miller illustrates how easy the law of the tithe works. Just after the Civil War, the membership of a little country church had been so depleted by the ravages of the war, and the poverty of the few who remained was so acute, that it seemed to be impossible to keep the church going. The little building in which they worshiped was so dilapidated that it was a public disgrace. The roof was leaking badly, the windows were all out, the floor was giving away, and the seats were broken down, and it seemed out of the question to worship in the building any longer. At a meeting of the little church, the vote was about to be taken to disband. Just then, one of the members arose and said, 'Brethren, if you will allow me to take charge of the financing of our church for this year, I will repair it and pay the amount due our pastor.' When asked how he proposed to do it, he replied, 'You must leave that to me, but at the end of the year, I will give you an account of my stewardship, and if you decide that I have done wrong in any way, I will sell my little home and live in a tent to make it right.' There was nothing else to do, and

the church accepted his proposition. Within a few weeks, he had a new roof on the little building, and during the next three or four months, new windows and a new floor and new seats were installed, and soon after, the building was painted. The members were amazed and astonished as to how he was doing it, for he was one of the poorest of them all. When the year closed and the time came to hear the report from the dear old brother, the little building was filled to overflowing. The church had taken on new life, and the pastor and the people were radiantly happy. And this was the dear old brother's story: 'You know, brethren, the Lord tells us in his Book to bring the tithe of all we make into his storehouse. You know we haven't been obeying him. And so, when you brought your corn down to my little mill to be ground, I just collected the Lord's share for him. I had a little box made that holds just one-tenth of a bushel, and for every bushel you brought to the mill, I took out the little box full and put it in the Lord's bin, ground it into meal and sold it. This is the way I have done it, and you did not miss it, and it was the happiest year our community has had for a long time.' How good God is to us! His plan will solve every financial problem that is perplexing us, and it is so easy that we will never miss the amount.

"There are many other motives that could be mentioned, but they are all hay, wood, and stubble, fit to be burned, when compared to the one and only motive, *For Jesus' Sake.*

"Through the centuries artists have tried to reproduce on canvass the beautiful love out of which came the words, 'For Jesus' Sake.' Sometimes the paintings are of a babe in its mother's arms, and then they are of a man with kindly face and tender, sympathetic eyes, and then a figure stretched upon a gaunt cross. Poets also have seen visions and dreamed dreams of the love that inspired, 'For Jesus' Sake,' and have tried to tell us of them in beautiful verse, but all the paintings and all the verse that fill the art galleries and libraries of the world can never reveal the transcendent glory of the love that gave this world a Saviour. Men can never really see that blessed face until the Father 'For Jesus' Sake' has forgiven, cleansed, and redeemed them from their sins.

"Do you remember when you first heard the words, 'For Jesus' Sake'? I can tell you. It was at your mother's knee, as she taught you that little childhood prayer:

> "'Now I lay me down to sleep,
> I pray the Lord my soul to keep,
> If I should die before I wake,
> I pray the Lord my soul to take,
> And this I ask, for Jesus' sake.'"

"We did not understand the meaning of 'For Jesus' Sake' at that tender age. We repeated them after mother, just as parrots are taught to say words. But, as the years passed, we came to the age of accountability, and realized that we were sinners, lost and undone, and without hope in the world. And then, that same sweet mother taught us the full meaning of those words, and with childlike faith we cried, 'O God, forgive us for Jesus' Sake.'

And in that hour, when the burden of sin was lifted, how precious did those words become!

"Again, as the years passed, we found the girl of our choice and made our little home. God blessed us with our first baby, and then little fingers clutched our hearts and held them like bands of gold. After a year God kissed her and took her to himself, and then all the world went black as we sat and gazed into the empty cradle. Our hearts were crushed and broken, but after a while when we were calm enough to listen, the good heavenly Father spoke to our souls: 'You cannot bring her back, but "For Jesus' Sake," you shall go to her some sweet day.' In that hour 'For Jesus' Sake' brought to us a new, fresh meaning that gave us a deeper love for the words than we had ever had before.

"And now, as some of us are facing the setting sun, and the shadows are longer grown, we realize that this house that we are living in is becoming dilapidated and unsteady on its foundation. The windows are covered with the dust of years, and it is with difficulty that we can look out and see the faces of loved ones and friends. The hinges on the doors are all covered with the rust of many winters, and they cry out as with pain when the doors are opened or closed. We know that we shall have to move out ere long to the mansion prepared for us across the river. And as we think of the journey through the valley of the shadow and the crossing of the dark, cold river, we fear no evil, for our Father will be with us, his rod and his staff shall comfort us, because 'For Jesus' Sake' we are his children."

My message is delivered. If I were to talk for a week upon the subject of stewardship, I could not cover it more completely than it is covered in Harris Franklin Rall's Symposium, entitled "My Money Creed."

He says:

I

My money is mine only in trust. It belongs to God, just as I do.

II

This money is not filthy lucre. It is not the devil's coin. It is stored up human power. It is so much of myself which I can set to work in China, or in India, or in New York, or in Colorado.

III

God is counting upon this money for his work. It is to build his churches and preach his gospel, train his workers, and send them out, teach, and heal, and save his children, and help bring in a new Kingdom of Righteousness and Brotherhood and Peace.

IV

To make my money honestly, and to spend my income rightly is one of my first tasks as a Christian. Until I settle this question, my prayers and confessions will be like saying, "Lord, Lord," and not doing the will of my Father.

V.

I should set aside a definite proportion of my income for the church, and the service of others. I do this in acknowledgment of God's sovereignty over all of my possessions. I do this to guard against my own selfishness. I do this because it is business-like. Giving by impulse and without system does not accord with the importance of the work.

VI

The proportion to be set aside for these purposes should not be less than one-tenth of my income. The Old Testament enjoined the tithe in ancient Israel, and surely I am receiving far more from God than did the men of any former generation. Nevertheless, one-tenth is not to be the limit of my giving. I should not begin with less than one-tenth. I ought to give more if I am able.

VII

I should invest this money for God as carefully as in my temporal business, and keep strict account of this fund. I should study the church, and its work, that I may give wisely. I should give systematically. I should pray with my giving.

Will you, will you, and you, and you, accept this Money Creed?

Someone is saying, "All this is true, and I should follow it if I were rich like my neighbor." My brother, this is not a creed for rich men. It is the Christian life that we have been talking about, and not the special duty of the few.

At the close of this talk, a request was made for all who would agree to tithe their income for at least one year to stand. The hall was comfortably filled, perhaps between 500 and 600, and everyone, as well as I could see, stood.

THE MORNING WATCH

MY MOST IMPORTANT TALK WITH PAUL

The old Greek philosopher used to say, "The highest duty of man is to 'Know Thyself,' " but our Christianity has taught us the far more important duty, "Know thy God." For, when we know the Creator, the power to know ourselves, his creatures, will come to us easily and naturally. In this age we hear so much said about relativity, the social system, complexes, etc., that it almost makes one's head swim. We have drifted too far from the old simplicity that our fathers enjoyed, and we harass our minds with all sorts of things; but the truth is that if we will put our trust in God, and just live secure in our faith in him, following his commands, all of these complexes will take care of themselves. E. Stanley Jones, in his *Christ of the Indian Road,* says, "The answer to the riddle of the universe is God; the answer to the riddle of God is Jesus Christ; and the answer to the riddle of Jesus Christ is his sacrificial life, culminating in his death on the Cross."

How may we know God? First, by kneeling at the foot of the Cross and accepting his Christ as our Saviour, our Lord and Master. Blessed knowledge! Happy day when first our sins were washed away! And then, as we work for him and with him day by day, we shall

know him better, and perhaps when we have proved by our faithfulness that we are worthy, some sweet day the blessed assurance may be given us that we are not servants only, but friends of God. And then we may enter into the Holy of holies with him, where he will talk to us as friend to friend.

Just here is where many of us fail. We are so busy, even in our work for him and service for him, that, like Martha, we do not give him the opportunity to talk to us. This is the common experience of our present-day Christianity. We know about God's plan of salvation, but we never know *him* until we learn to be quiet. Our attitude should be that of Samuel, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." Too often our attitude is "Listen, Lord, I speak." Not only laymen, but ministers, Christian workers, and missionaries on the fields are realizing this fact more and more. In this busy, rushing life, with so much to do, we do not take time to commune with our heavenly Father. And so, I'm giving this earnest warning, first to my own soul, and then to you, my dear young friends, and older ones as well. Don't allow any duties, however pressing, to interfere with your prayer life. It is so easy to get tied up with even our Christian work that we may neglect the most important thing.

Surely, if Jesus found it necessary to spend so much time in prayer, how much more imperative is it for you and me. How often we read, "He went up into the mountain to pray." "It came to pass as he was praying in a certain place." "He withdrew again into the mountain to pray." On the night before choosing his disciples,

"He went out into the mountain and continued all night in prayer to God."

And when the people wanted to make him king, "He withdrew again into the mountain himself alone to pray."

When the Greeks asked to see him, and he spoke of his approaching death, "He prayed."

At Lazarus' grave, "He prayed."

In his last night, "He prayed."

In Gethsemane, "He prayed."

On the Cross, "He prayed."

Christ's life and work, his suffering and death—it was all prayer.

Oh, if he, our blessed Saviour, needed to pray so much, how much more do we need to pray!

Whatever we fail to do as we go out into our God-called task, we must not fail to pray. We can accomplish more in an hour with God directing than in a year without his guiding hand.

It is our blessed privilege to pray any time, anywhere, and under any circumstances. And many of you exercise this precious privilege. But may I suggest and urge that you definitely set aside thirty minutes, at least, in the early morning of every new day to devotion and prayer, all alone, a period to be devoted to communion with your heavenly Father, with the sole purpose of gaining food for your *own* soul, of becoming better acquainted with him, of listening quietly to his still, small voice. He is more anxious to speak to us than we are to hear. His loving, fatherly heart yearns to have us alone and quiet long enough to listen to his words.

One morning, as you sit in the quiet, perhaps he will bring to your mind the unkind word spoken yesterday, the insincere word, the untrue word, the sarcastic word, the thoughtless, foolish word, the impure thought, the unholy desire, the selfish wish, the unjust criticism, the unfair advantage, omissions and commissions, and unconscious sins, and in that holy hour you will hear him say, "My dear child, I died on the Cross that you might be saved from all these things." And your soul, as well as your eyes, will be filled with tears of contrition, and you'll cry out for forgiveness. And then you'll hear the sweetest voice, in the tenderest tones that ever fell upon your ears, "I forgive you, my child, go and sin no more."

Can you imagine a more helpful experience? Could anyone come out of an hour like that with unkindness to any living man in his heart? Could any resentment or malice live through an hour like that? Could *any* sin remain with you?

Another morning. Listen, the voice is speaking again: "Be not anxious; I'm your heavenly Father. Fear not, have faith in me, trust me; you will unfit yourself for your task if you allow fear to come into your heart. Don't you remember how often I had to warn my disciples against being fearful? If I feed the birds and care for them, you should know that I will care for you."

To you, my dear preacher brethren, the still small voice may come in that holy hour in the words that he spoke to Peter in that early morning by the sea, "Lovest thou me? Feed my sheep. Lovest thou me? Feed my lambs. Lovest thou me? Feed my sheep." And when

you hear it, God grant that the shepherd heart may come into your life to abide with you through all the way to the end of the day.

To those of us who are in the evening of life, the voice often comes over the mystic cord of memory, stretching from childhood up through the years to us, and we are once again back in the old home with father and mother, brothers and sisters. It is Sunday morning; six little tousled heads have to be combed, and six little wriggling bodies have to be dressed for Sunday school. How mother's hands fly as she hurries to get us ready. We hear again father's words as he opens the Sunday school and announces the song, and his deep bass and mother's full, rich alto thrill our souls. We again hear old Uncle Richard Jones lead in prayer, and the beautiful and frequently used invocation, "Be unto us as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land," falls upon our ears. We did not understand the meaning of this beautiful excerpt from the Book of books, but as the years have passed and we have been called upon again and again to pass through the burning, blazing heat of trials and tribulations, how often our own lips have voiced those same words!

And, coming out of an experience like that, we take courage, and renew our vows to love and serve more devotedly the God that father and mother taught us to love during those tender years.

Another morning, during our Morning Watch, the voice speaks directly to our soul, as we sit in the quiet waiting. "This is August 2," the voice kept repeating. "Yes,

I know it is, but what of it?" And all at once it came to me, "Yes, I now remember; August 2 is my wife's birthday, and I had not thought of it. Thank you, Father; I'm so glad you reminded me. Slipping down the stair easily, so as not to awaken her, and telling the cook that she must prepare the finest dinner she possibly could, and do it secretly, with a big cake and the little candles all over it, that I would send up everything from the grocer, and all the flowers for the home, and we would invite the pastor and our son and his wife and baby, and have a big surprise for Mrs. Anderson. The chauffeur was to prolong her evening drive until 6:00 o'clock, that the preparations might all be made during her absence. Everything worked like a charm, and all was in readiness—the table was laden, the home was full of flowers, the guests were all on hand, and we were waiting for the car to return from the drive, on tiptoe with excitement. Presently we heard the purr of the motor, and all of us rushed out to help the precious one out of the car and to greet her. She had forgotten that it was her birthday. For nearly a year she had suffered with a broken limb and was still on crutches. She was astonished to see the visitors, and still more so to see the home beautifully decorated. The visitors giving evidence that they had come to stay for dinner, Mrs. Anderson finally said, "We would love to have you do so, but I'm sorry that we have made no preparation, and you will not be very bountifully served, I fear. I have been out all afternoon and don't know what the cook has prepared." About that moment the announcement was made by the maid

that dinner was served. Mrs. Anderson said, "Excuse me just a minute until I see what we have for you."

We all followed close behind, and when her eyes fell upon the laden table, and the cake with all the candles lighted, it dawned upon her what it was all about. She laughed and she cried, and we followed suit. She threw her arms around my neck, and said, "Jim, I had rather had you remember my birthday in this way than to have had a handful of diamonds."

Other birthdays had always been celebrated with some little gift, but without much ado. This was the first in all of my busy life that any time or thought had been given to the occasion. How like this many of us treat our heavenly Father! We give him a few dollars of our money, but we fail to give him our time, our thought, our service.

Do you wonder, my dear friends, that as the years go by, my Morning Watch grows sweeter and sweeter to me? If no other blessing ever had come out of it than the blessed experience of which I have just told you, it would be abundant recompense. For that was the last birthday we had together. Her birthdays since then have been in the beautiful mansion Jesus had prepared for her in the New Jerusalem.

Yes, my last word would be, "Establish the Morning Watch while you are young, that it may become so fixed in your daily life that you can never start the day without it. It holds the secret of a happy and successful life, and you will join hands with Ralph Cushman, who wrote these beautiful lines entitled "The Secret."

I met God in the morning,
When my day was at its best,
And his presence came as the sunrise,
Like glory within my breast.

All day long the Presence lingered,
All day long he stayed with me,
And we sailed in perfect calmness
O'er a very troubled sea.

Other ships were torn and battered,
Other ships were sore distressed,
But the winds that seemed to drive them
Brought to us both peace and rest.

Then I thought of other mornings,
With a deep distress of mind,
When I, too, had loosed the moorings
With the Presence left behind.

And so, I think I know the secret,
Learned from many a troubled way,
You must seek God in the morning,
If you want him through the day."

My message is delivered, and I could never express my pleasure and appreciation for all the fine courtesies you have shown me during these days we have been together. Nor can I ever forget the kind, patient way in which you have listened to the poor words I have brought you. All I can say for them is that they were a faithful recital of my experiences with Paul Weatherby. I wish you could know him as I do. I am sure that you would love him as I do.

Do you recall those words of Dickens, with which he closed *David Copperfield?*

"And now, as I close my task, subduing my desire to linger yet, these faces fade away. But, one face, shining on me like a

heavenly light by which I see all other objects, is above them and beyond them all. And that remains.

"I turn my head, and see it, in its beautiful serenity, beside me. My lamp burns low, and I have written far into the night; but the dear presence, without which I were nothing, bears me company.

"O Agnes, O my soul, so may thy face be by me when I close my life indeed; so may I, when realities are melting from me like the shadows which I now dismiss, still find thee near me, pointing upward."

With much of the same feeling, I am closing my little task. And now, as I close it, the imaginary Paul Weatherby fades away, and instead of him, I see you, this class, the spirit of which came to me in the form of that shadowy visitor whom I tried to advise just as I would my own son. I shall remember his visit to my latest day, and to this group of young people who have been called into God's shining path of service, and whose hopes and joys and fears Paul so faithfully portrayed, I give my heart's sincerest devotion, and shall watch with deepest interest your career in the noblest calling offered to man.

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